Interview with David S. Brown

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

PROFESSOR DAVID S. BROWN

Interviewed by: Melbourne Spector

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Q: Professor Brown has been a newspaper reporter, has served in state and national government, and has been on the faculty of George Washington University since 1954, where, among other positions, he has chaired the Department of Public Administration. He is the author of several books, numerous articles, and monographs. He's served on many commissions and on international delegations.

My name is Melbourne Spector, and I am the Director of the Marshall Plan Oral History Project. I had the pleasure of serving with Professor Brown in the Marshall Plan, and I will take the advantage of our friendship by addressing him informally, if I may, Dave, during our interview.

Dave, let's go back a little bit. Tell me how you got involved with the Marshall Plan. How did you ever come to be in that August organization?

BROWN: I was on the Secretariat of the Air Coordinating Committee, which was a committee made up of five or six government departments to deal with aviation. I think it was Bud Rupard, who was in Don Sonn's office, who suggested that I talk to Gordon Reckord. I did talk with Reckord, and as a result, I moved over there a month or so later.

I served from 1950 to 1953 in the Marshall Plan, and as a result of a project undertaken by the Public Advisory Board, a study of national trade and air policy—which, incidentally, was the first presidential-level study ever done of this subject—I did not ingratiate myself with Governor Stassen. Along with 800 or 900 other people, I was dropped from the agency.

I went from there to the staff of a commission that was set up as a result of our study to encourage development of a national trade policy—tariffs, trade, and other things. I was there until I came to George Washington University, as you've indicated, in 1954. I've been with this university since 1954 to 1986, when I retired, having reached retirement age.

As a matter of fact, I had completed all my work for a doctoral degree, except for the dissertation. The subject of my dissertation was “The Public Advisory Board and the Federal Government,” with major emphasis on what happened at the Marshall Plan. I was just looking at the table of contents of the dissertation, which is a long one—500 pages—to see if there were any other chapters which might apply, and there might be. I remembered those two in particular.

Q: I understand that you'll make these chapters available to be made a part of this study.

BROWN: Yes, I'd be glad to.

Q: Thank you very much.

BROWN: I think the two chapters, which you already have, are useful in the fact that I did considerable exploring of the origins of the public advisory group.

Q: I think it's very important.

BROWN: Yes. One of the functions of the secretariat was that of serving as a staff to advisory boards. I took that on when I joined the agency.

Q: Fascinating! Do you feel that the advisory board of the Marshall Plan made any new advances in the whole conduct of advisory boards in the government?

BROWN: Only one, and that was one in which I was particularly closely associated with. That was the study undertaken by President Truman to explore national trade policy and tariff policy.

Q: That's amazing. In all this time, we've never had a high-level study until the board took it on.

BROWN: We never had a high-level study until 1952.

Q: Amazing.

BROWN: It's a study which we could not possibly complete by the time President Eisenhower took office, and overtures were made to him to determine whether or not he wanted us to conclude this study. Because Eisenhower was, in general, afraid to lower tariffs, he indicated to us that he was interested in having us complete the study.

We completed the study and made it known to the press, I think in March 19__, which turned out to be the day Stalin died. Even with that, the reports of the study made the front pages of The New York Times and the Washington Post.

Q: The study did not continue at the very end under the aegis of the foreign aid agency, is that right?

BROWN: Yes, it did continue under the aegis of the foreign aid agency, but the director of the agency at the time, Averell Harriman, then later Harold Stassen, were not members of the board. Harriman excused himself from it. In 1952, if you remember, he was running for the Democratic nomination for President, and he felt it would be improper to sit on the board. The board selected another person, Daniel Bell, who was then the president and

chairman of the board, I think, of the American Security Bank here in Washington. He had been an Under Secretary of the Treasury and also one of the first budget OMB directors in the country, and was a thoroughly reputable person. He was selected by the board unanimously to serve as its chairman for the purpose of making this study.

Q: In reading one of the chapters of your dissertation, I was interested when I read the little biographical statement on Bell, that he started out as a stenographer in the government. It shows that you can begin at the bottom and work your way up.

BROWN: William A. Jump, whose name is known to many people for his work as Director of Finance for the Department of Agriculture, started as an assistant messenger. I think I was hired over there because one summer, I'd served in Washington as a grade-one—in those days, it was CAF-1—as a messenger.

Q: And a delightful job to get when you were first coming out of school.

BROWN: I was pleased to get it, even though I had a ____ degree at the time. I think that the reason he selected me was because both he and his assistant, Harry Nelson, had been messengers along the way.

Q: Oh, really?

BROWN: Yes. I can't think of any other good reason.

Q: You don't think there was any other, either your training or so on?

BROWN: It was a very humble job, and they felt, I think—neither one of them had a college degree—that if someone with a college degree who had done a number of things on campus, that is, with the yearbook, etc., was willing to take that job, there must be something good in him. In any event, they hired me. For about six months, my education was continued because Jump took me into his own office and I had a desk beside his.

Q: Oh, how wonderful! That must have been terrific.

BROWN: I made the acquaintance of a number of people—Paul Appleby, Milton Eisenhower, and other persons who later went on to significant roles.

Q: Where did you go from that job?

BROWN: I went from that job directly into flying aircraft for the Navy. I was a pilot of dive-bombers. I joined the fleet in the early spring of 1945, and served in the Pacific. Before that, I had also been an instructor of dive-bombing at the Naval Air Station in Miami.

I brought along something for you that you can look at later, a couple of things which I have written, which you may be interested in looking at.

Q: I would. Thank you very much.

BROWN: They don't have very much to do with this project. One of them is the things obituaries leave out, which is whimsical.

Q: Very good. Thank you very much. Then you went from the Navy into civilian life?

BROWN: I went from the Navy into the Civil Aeronautics Administration. Then from there I later went onto the Air Coordinating Committee. I was in personnel work at the Civil Aeronautics Administration.

I think that my struggle, as long as I served in the federal government, was to be in a substantive area, and my years in staff functions were on the weight of that. I never made substantive area until I joined the faculty of this university.

Q: You don't feel that being the secretary—if that was the title—to the Public Advisory Board was a substantive position?

BROWN: Well, of course it had matters of substance in it, but really it was a staff kind of position.

One of the unfortunate things about the study of public administration, and having served at this university for many years, is that its graduates are hired primarily by persons who are in staff areas. That includes secretariats, budget offices, management divisions, personnel, etc. I always wanted to serve in an area that was concerned with some of the substantive things directly. Of course, as your own career suggests, you have an impact in many kinds of ways, but this was to come later in my case.

Q: That's interesting. You feel that the graduates of the public administration departments don't generally get into substance, as such.

BROWN: It isn't a matter of feeling; it's a matter of knowing.

Q: That's interesting.

BROWN: A lot of people aren't disserved by that. The present faculty here is not disserved by it. Ultimately I became a professor of management. I first was a professor of political science and public administration. Then in the past 15 years, I've been a professor of management. You'll see in my writings I'm identified as “professor of management.”

My feeling is that people in public administration should focus more than they have done in the past upon teaching people who are in economics or law or forestry, whatever area they have chosen to take their initial degree in, should help them with the business of managing within the federal system. The students that I like to get best here are those who had experience and training in other kinds of areas, so I can begin to talk about subjects such as managing and subjects such as working for a public agency, both of which have peculiar aspects that are different from what they would ordinarily get.

I've continued to be a speaker at the Office of Personnel Management's executive programs, and will be speaking this week. I'm delighted, because nobody in there will be from the staff areas; they'll all be from substantive areas. They'll be from Immigration and Naturalization, from the Defense Department, from Housing, from the Washington Police Department, etc. I can talk with them about getting their job done and the kind of management situation that they find while they're working for the public service.

Q: That's very interesting, Dave.

BROWN: That's what I've tried to do here, I might add without some of the successes that I had hoped to have.

Q: One never does, probably.

BROWN: Well, I suppose that's true.

Q: To get back to the Public Advisory Board of the Marshall Plan, do you feel that as a board for the Plan, for ECA and MSA, that it served its purpose, that it got things done? What would you say were the main purposes of the Board?

BROWN: I would say that the main purpose of the Board, number one, was to assure the Republicans in the 80th Congress that somebody outside of the Truman Administration would be having a hand in the running of the agency. I think that's what happened, and I think that because the members of the Board were, on the whole, good men and one woman, that they did that.

Secondly, they would have been willing to do more if they could have done more.

Q: What do you mean by that?

BROWN: The directors of the agency, chiefly presidents like Hoffman, had no faith whatsoever in advisory boards. It was all a pretense, as far as he was concerned. Hoffman

was a person who was very charismatic, and he could be talking with me in a briefing before the Board, and say, “Well, you know, I don't see any particular purpose in doing all this,” etc. “When I was at Studebaker, we ran the agency with the help of an attorney, a comptroller, and one of the engineering people, and that's all I really need.” He would say this. Then he would go into the board room and captivate all of the members of the Board.

That wasn't true of all of the people. It certainly wasn't true of one of his deputies, Richard Bissell. If you've been following any of the kinds of things on television and in the literature that have happened to Bissell since that time, you can understand why most of them didn't work out. Bissell would come in to the Board, and as the Board said to me, “He uses us like a bunch of school children. He wants to tell us how much he knows and how bright he is.”

So as a result of that, we would not put Bissell on at each session of the Board; we would put him on perhaps one in four, because the members of the Board didn't care for him. They did care for Hoffman.

I'd like to say, additionally, that when Harriman took over as director of the agency, we found this person who had a great deal of difficulty communicating with his fellow man, to be a man who did believe that the Board was a good thing to have. He would talk to the members of the Board in a slow, labored kind of way. They had an opportunity to make comments to him. Many times I've talked with George Elsey, who had been a Truman assistant. He was the assistant to Harriman when Harriman became administrator of Mutual Security. He said, “Mr. Harriman would like such and such done.” For the most part, what I remember about Harriman is he said, “Do what you think you need to do with the Board. Of course I want to know about it, but the only advice I give you is don't get me in any trouble as a result of what the Board does.” Of course, we didn't.

Harriman, peculiarly enough for a person of his background and nature, did believe in listening. He would listen to the members of the Board. He would often say, “What do you

think of that? Do you think we're going in the right direction?" The Board ordinarily said, "Yes," or made some suggestion to him that they'd like to have him do more of this and this and that or something of the sort. Harriman did listen. I never was sure whether he heard or not, because his service at that time was in a period when we thought he needed a hearing aid, but he hadn't decided that he needed one yet. He later adopted one.

As a matter of fact, the decision that was made with agreement by Harriman for the Board to undertake a study was as a result of his efforts to involve the Board more fully, and was also the result—perhaps some of the members of the Board had communicated it to him—that they felt that all they were really doing was putting on a pretense of giving him advice. So we discussed with Harriman the possibility of the Board undertaking a study, possibly a presidential-level study.

I talked with as many people as I could talk with about some subject that we would like to have studied, and some subject in which we thought the Board would come out with some findings that the administration could live with. A number of things were suggested. Willard Thorp, who was then Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, said, "You know, it would be helpful if we undertook a study in which we put everything together and looked at everything, trade and tariff policy in this country."

When I had concluded my visits to quite a number of other people concerning what the Board might do, it seemed to me that this was the most reasonable one and the most useful one, because certainly it wouldn't interfere with anything that the agency had done. It ought to be helpful to Mutual Security, etc. And I recommended that this is what we undertake. It so happened that this recommendation was followed.

Then I had the job of trying to find a chairman of the Board, somebody who could provide leadership to the Board in this area, but was not so fully committed that the leadership would be later said to be all in one direction.

Q: Was the chairman of the Board supposed to be the head of the agency?

BROWN: The chairman of the Board, according to the statute, is the head of the agency. The head of the agency was asked to consult with these 12 other members of the Board.

Hoffman frequently said that this was a waste of a day or a day and a half's time. And the members of the Board said, “We think that the chief contribution we have made is that of taking up a day and a half of your time.” Hoffman always denied this. He said, “No, I want to meet with you,” and so on.

I might add, parenthetically, that Hoffman began his career in the automobile business as a car salesman. When he learned that the Secretary of Commerce at the time under Truman, whose name I don't recall, didn't own an automobile, Hoffman undertook the business of selling him an automobile. As a result of this, he did sell him a Studebaker. He called on his wife, he sent flowers to her, he did all of the kind of things that a first-rate salesman does. Life magazine and some other magazines made quite a splash of Hoffman really fulfilling the role of Secretary of Commerce and that of doing some things that were helpful to American business.

Q: But in this instance, you were able to have Bell appointed as the chairman of the Board for the purpose of this study?

BROWN: Yes. As a matter of fact, a number of names were suggested. I did a recruiting job to try to find somebody who was acceptable to all of the members of the board. Dan Bell, after his governmental service, moved over to American Security Bank. As a person, he was a very conservative person. He would never throw a paper clip away. He would never do anything of this sort. It wasn't easy getting him accepted, but ultimately we got him accepted by a 12-to-0 vote. There were two or three members of the Board who had doubts concerning him. One member was opposed to him. That was resolved by my getting the 11 other members to favor Bell, and he went along.

Q: So the twelfth went along.

BROWN: The twelfth went along because he didn't want to make it 11 to one.

Q: I don't think at this date it would matter to know who the twelfth one was.

BROWN: The twelfth member of the Board was Alan Kline of the Farm Bureau. Because Jim Patton was also on the Board and Patton was a liberal and the head of the most competitive farm organization to the Farm Bureau, the Farmers' Union, Kline had a tendency not to favor anything that Patton favored.

Q: So with Patton and Kline, you had agriculture represented on the Board.

BROWN: We had a third agriculture representative, the National Grange.

Q: What were the other parts of American life that were represented?

BROWN: The labor unions had three representatives, including George Meany, who was then Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of Labor. We also had three representatives from business. We had Eric Johnston, who was then the president of the Chamber of Commerce and also the movie czar. We also had a very important man, George Meade, who was head of the Meade Paper Company, a large concern, a strong Republican. But Meade was one of the more creative and more thoughtful people on the Board, and if something made sense to Meade, he favored it. He would always listen to what somebody else had to say.

Q: So you had industry, labor, agriculture.

BROWN: Yes. Three members of industry. The third, I suppose, was Orin Lehman. He was hardly a businessman, although he had to fit in that category.

Q: In reading part of your dissertation, I noticed that the industry business seemed to attend meetings more consistently than either of the other areas. I don't know whether that's true or not. Is that how I read the statistics?

BROWN: It depended, in part, on how convenient it was. For example, Eric Johnston attended a lot of meetings. George Meade attended a lot. George Meade was in his seventies at the time, and one surmises that he was not the CEO of the company any longer, although he probably was the most influential. Patton attended. His headquarters were in Denver, but the farmers' union was always somewhat strapped for money, and the aid agency paid his way to Washington for attending the meetings. I presume he was attentive.

Q: I think it would be interesting for the historical buffs to know what was the honorarium that you paid these people.

BROWN: Fifty dollars a day.

Q: And how much per diem, in lieu of subsistence?

BROWN: I don't remember.

Q: I can tell you. Ten dollars, according to your study. Ten dollars! Unbelievable. (Laughs)

BROWN: I'd forgotten.

Q: So under the aegis of Daniel Bell, you went into this foreign trade study.

BROWN: Yes. Bell had been chairman of the board of the American Security Bank and served the President by looking into problems in the Philippines. These were economic problems. In doing so, he had worked with the man who was formally on the ECA staff. His name was Vincent Checchi. Also he had worked with a person who was head of research of the International Monetary Fund, Eddie Bernstein, Dr. Edward Bernstein. Bernstein

became the chief economist or executive director—I guess he was the executive director, but he was the chief economist, and was responsible for the study, by and large.

Q: Did you get him on loan?

BROWN: He was on loan from the Monetary Fund. As I look back, there wasn't much activity at the time at the Monetary Fund. This was a period before we had decided to finance everything in South America that needed financing. I felt that Bernstein welcomed the change for a while. He came here, he brought his secretary with him, both courtesy of the Monetary Fund, and undertook the study.

Q: You say Checchi was on it, too?

BROWN: No, Checchi was not on it. Checchi was a great admirer of Bell, and he provided me with some useful information about Bell's capabilities and about what he could be expected to do. But Checchi was not involved in the study at all. I later became very friendly with Checchi. I became very friendly with Bernstein, and even though he was one of these whiz-bang economists that one often talks about, and I was not an economist, merely a young fellow trying to make a living, Eddie and I became good friends. The friendship still remains.

Q: Good.

BROWN: He's retired, also. He's probably eight or ten years older than I am. Last I heard, he was doing some consulting in Washington and discovering that there was money to be made at it.

Q: Someone like him should do very well. Was this study approved by all of the Board?

BROWN: It was approved by all of the Board. There were no elements of it that were not approved. The Board made a single report. All of the board members had influence in it. It was a good report. For the first time, the Board followed a pattern of indicating that we

needed a trade and tariff policy that was concerned with national problems and not merely individual and local ones.

Previously, our trade and tariff policy had been made in bits and pieces. One of the elements of it was the Smoot-Hawley Tariff. If anybody went into the Smoot-Hawley Tariff hearings with the desire to have the tariff raised on any given subject which they might manufacture, which persons from other countries, Portugal, Spain, or Italy, and so on, were providing competition for, Hamilton Fish, who was important in that on the House side, would give them what they wanted.

I once heard Hamilton Fish make a speech, in which he had indicated that he would like to have a higher tariff on poultry than existed. Smoot asked him to write a letter to that effect to the committee. So he did write the letter, saying, “I would appreciate it very much if you would put a higher tariff on poultry.” And he signed it “Ham Fish.” According to his version, they put a higher tariff on poultry and ham and fish. This is an anecdote which I heard him make in a speech, which I've always remembered.

Q: Was there any major recommendations from the report that had taken place? For instance, did the report recommend, as we have today, a special person for trade? We now have a special trade representative.

BROWN: No, it did not make that recommendation. Its primary purpose was saying that we ought to have a trade and tariff policy that reflects, as best as we can identify it, national, rather than local, interests.

Q: Which is good enough.

BROWN: Which is a tremendous idea, if you stop and think of it. Shortly after that, Governor Stassen, who felt that this was always an undertaking aimed at making life difficult for him and the administration, persuaded the administration to undertake another presidential-level study, which was done. This new study—for a moment I forget the

name of it—had members of Congress on it. There were several minority reports filed, and they never got it all together. As a result of this, the recommendations that we made were undercut. Eisenhower went on with what amounted to, in effect, a Republican counterstudy to the one that we'd undertaken. But it came down in several pieces, not all in one piece, and this handicapped the trade-lowering business for some time.

Q: Please refresh my understanding. Why was Stassen and, I suppose, the Republican administration, against it? These days, in 1989, the Republicans are noted for wanting a free-trade policy. So back then you had, I guess, the Republicans not quite in favor of a free-trade policy?

BROWN: Republicans historically in this country have always been a high-tariff party. While Stassen was probably more reasonable in that respect than some of the others, he was really running for President himself. If you will note the fact that he's run for President six or seven times at least, this was, I suspect, all part of his efforts. At least he indicated to me his feelings which were somewhat along this line. He felt that this was an effort to make life difficult for him.

I talked with him shortly before I was removed as secretary of the Board. I said to him, in effect, “I've always been civil service.” He said, “Yes, but the dossier that I have on you indicates that you've been particularly close to a number of the Democrats.” I said, “Yes, Governor, that's all that there was on the administrative side for a number of years.”

Q: For quite a few years.

BROWN: It seemed to me that he did it out of affection, rather than duty.

Q: Stassen was a very, very interesting person, I must say, having worked with him myself. Is there anything else that you'd like to say about the Board, any summation? What do you feel about boards in general, that kind of board, as a device?

BROWN: I've written a number of articles on it. Recently a member of the faculty of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem came here to deliver a paper at the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and he sought me out because he'd read some of the things that I had written before. I come down strongly in favor of boards. I think they are a device by which one can find out how some of the clients are feeling, and I think it's a good thing to have this as a device.

Most of the boards in this town are put to special uses. Administrators like to have them when they feel that the Board will support them in some of the problems they have, particularly with respect to Congress. I might add that a couple of times Hoffman did this by saying, “I think it would be useful if some of you people got in touch with your congressmen. Here are the telephone numbers. You can call him now.” The Public Advisory Group suspended while people went out and went to telephones to tell members of Congress how they felt about certain pieces of legislation which they agreed with.

Q: So he used it as kind of a congressional relations device.

BROWN: Yes. I feel that administrators use them for those purposes. I also feel, as in the case of the Institutes of Public Health, they use them when the administrators don't want to make a decision themselves. They put the matter up to the board. Boards have been used in the national institutes to grant people monies for research, etc.

If you are a member of a board at that time, and your university is putting in a claim for more money, you'll leave the room for that particular incident, and the board goes on without you. I think this is very bad, because it's merely another way of getting around what was initially intended. That sort of thing did not happen with the Marshall Plan

This idea of the Marshall Plan was so unique and unusual, and I'd like to use the word “good,” that the members of the Board accepted it as such and were willing to do what they could do, with a couple of exceptions, to support it. Exceptions did not include most

of the organizations represented. It did include, among other things, labor, where they felt that they were wasting their time by attending and didn't care to come in and be counted as members when they were really having very little to do with what was decided. One can look up in the chapters I've written the attendance records of the members of the Board, and this sort of speaks for itself.

I am very much in favor of the boards in the private sector, as well as the public sector. However, experience with boards of directors of companies indicate that in almost all respects, they're beholden to management itself, and they will do what the president of the company wants them to do. The only thing that they really do, by and large, is to find a replacement for the president when his term is over or, for one reason or another, he has to be replaced. I think that there are lots of little boards around the federal government which do a very great deal to bring information to the attention of administrators, who tend to isolate themselves within the federal government.

Q: What would you say is the difference between a commission and a board?

BROWN: We usually use the word “commission” to indicate either the old Civil Service Commission or the terrace commission, which was a way that Congress found of getting some of the things that it badly wanted put into practice. That's one of the meanings of the word.

Another meaning of the word “commission” is that it's an alternative to “committee.” I tend to find them used interchangeably and are generally used with respect to presidential commissions. For example, President Reagan appointed a commission to see what could be . . .

[End Tape I, Side 1. Begin Tape I, Side 2]

BROWN: Its assignment is that of making a finding, and that's what we try to do. We had no power whatsoever, except through the power of ideas. We attempted to put forward

this idea that the tariff and trade policy should be done according to what we can best determine to be the national interest, rather than the interests of somebody in West Virginia or Tennessee or someone there.

I think that the presidential commission here is something of a replica of the Royal Commission in Britain, although the Royal Commission has higher standing. It's a term which can be used as anybody would like to use it for committee or special board or something of that sort. Generally speaking, it has no power except to make a report, to undertake the study of a particular matter, and make a report.

Q: That's true.

BROWN: I have tried to say in some of the writings, most of which have been rejected by publishers who felt that I was not aiming at the right thing, that there are uses that can be made of committees if you will try to find out how the members of the committee read the tea leaves in either the industry that they're representing, the general public, or something of that sort. I've testified twice before Congress as an expert in advisory committees, and I've had some material of mine published, but I've gone on to other things. Nobody was buying that. I'm going to give it another shot at the nation's business.

Q: Frankly, the whole business of commissions, committees, and boards, I think an appropriate time has come for the general use of those. You have recently the pay commission, I believe it was called, that did very badly its job. Just a few years ago, you had another commission. You had this other commission recently on the national debt. That hasn't done well.

BROWN: No.

Q: Then you've had one on ethics. Two or three years ago, we had one that did very well on the Social Security matter. So it would be interesting to find why did one of them work and why didn't the others work.

BROWN: Often one of the reasons that they don't work is because they are not given an assignment where the objectives are specified clearly enough, or they're given an assignment, as in the case of the recent pay one, where they make a recommendation that has power behind it. Power always encourages anti-power. So the best commissions come in and, with a straight face, try to make the results of looking at a particular problem known to the general public. If the general public cares enough about it to read it and will think about it, then all of this is good. If they don't, then it's a waste of time.

Q: Would you say that a commission on which the members have some authority—for instance, I'm thinking of the two Hoover Commissions, at least the first one was a very successful commission.

BROWN: Yes.

Q: One reason I think it was successful—and I'd like your views on this—is because it had members of Congress on it, as well as public and, I think, the Executive Branch. What came out of the commission's recommendations would take ultimately a congressional legislation of some kind.

BROWN: Well, I'm going to disagree with you there.

Q: All right.

BROWN: I think the commissions that have the most difficulty are often those with members of Congress on them, because they're wearing two hats. They're wearing the hat of members of the commission, and they also are wearing the hat of members of Congress representing constituents. There's often substantial conflict between the two.

Q: That's interesting.

BROWN: I've written on the subject of the kind of people who ought to be commission members. I've found that the people who were on the Public Advisory Board were, on the whole, very decent people. They were people who understood their assignment and tried to contribute to it. I think that these represent the kind of ones that we ought to have. They paid attention, some of them read all of the material we sent them. We heard what they had to say.

Interestingly enough, if I had stayed on with the Public Advisory Board, I had another project in mind that Sara Blanding, who was then resident of Vassar, agreed to take. That was a study to indicate what some of our foreign policy assignments would be, and the kind of knowledge that students who would ultimately be asked to fulfill these jobs ought to have. How much should the universities be encouraged to go into the teaching of the knowledge of Russian history, for example? Or pick any other country that you want to. The State Department has to take a look at the kind of people that it has on the payroll and whether or not any of them can speak Russian. Rarely is somebody able to speak Russian or Albanian or God knows what.

My feeling was that if we could make available through studies to university systems—and this is well before I came here—what would likely be required of people getting into the Foreign Service or related services such as we represented over at the Marshall Plan, this would be enormously useful.

Miss Blanding bought the idea immediately. The field that Sara Blanding was from, I forget. I have a feeling that her doctorate was in physical education or something like that, totally unrelated to what we were talking about.

Q: But as president of Vassar.

BROWN: She had been made president of Vassar because, presumably, she could administer the affairs of the university. She was a very decent person. I sounded her

out on this, and she welcomed this as an idea. Governor Stassen took care of my future insofar as he could before any of this had a chance to break. As a matter of fact, he fired Miss Blanding, along with me and all the other members. (Laughs) But that's more or less the effect. This is what happens when you get close to the top.

Q: Then the Advisory Board could really be used in almost anything that was related to the functions, including making various kinds of studies. The kind of thing that maybe a policy planning staff might be doing at the State Department could be done by the Board.

BROWN: I have come to the conclusion, primarily after I've been here at this university, trying to understand business and governmental organization, that one of the things that a lot of administrators are most concerned with is who might be a menace to their authority. It's an interesting thing. We have the idea that there ought to be a chain of command, kind of a pyramidal effect, at the top. All you have to do is know something about American history. All you have to do is read the Constitution, to realize that the system of government we have depends on the cooperation of a lot of people. The sum total of what I've learned over 50 years is that what we need to go toward, what we need to be driven by, is the need for establishing systems where people cooperate with each other voluntarily, because they believe it's the right thing to do, and they believe there is not really any good alternative.

If we don't cooperate, we have the US Government producing 8,000 atomic warheads and the Russian Government producing 5,000, which probably 20 will serve the same purpose, not 20,000.

Q: Twenty.

BROWN: Twenty will serve the same purpose.

I would like to make an example of it. For example, President Bush's cooperation with the Congress is essential. I call this building a pyramid. I'm going to get into something that

I've written, a new piece which is already at the publisher's. Actually, the pattern that you and I lived under has been the pattern of the pyramid, the pattern of “I'm in charge of this,” the pattern of the father who wants to make all the decisions in the family, or the mother, because the mother is peculiarly equipped to make the decisions and they have some means of enforcing them, which every man in his maturity knows something about and can speak to.

What I feel is the pattern that we need to be looking to, how things are done, are universities, hospitals, symphony orchestras, voluntary community organizations, the military in combat, and I could give you other illustrations. People today say, “You want us to run a business the way you run a university?” We say, “Yeah, why don't you try it?” Some of them already have and are doing well with it. “You want us to run a hospital the way hospitals are currently run?” “Yes! Yes, I do.”

In the past three years, I spent six weeks, at least, in hospitals, with nothing to do except turn the TV on to the lousy programs that come on in the middle of the day, or to think about what I can observe from my bed. When you need a doctor, they can't possibly find one. They might find you a two-year medical student who's called “doctor” but isn't.

So if there's something the matter with you and you have an emergency which isn't a life-threatening emergency, but one that threatens your comfort, you need a catheter put in or taken out, or you need, as I did, an attack of gout to be treated because it was so goddamn sore, my foot was so sore that I couldn't even keep a sheet on it, what do you do? Well, I tell you. You talk with a nurse. I say, “Now, I know you're not a doctor. I know you can't prescribe medicine, but I know you know what the doctors prescribe. Don't you have some way of getting it?”

She goes out and reads her job classification, and she said, “Well, you know I can't provide you with this.”

I said, “Well, why don't you tell one of these second-year medical students who goes by the name of “doctor” what is usually needed and let him get it for me. Let him sign the RX.” I find that this cooperative system, the nurses cooperate with doctors.

By the way, I talked this over with a number of doctors. I am also prepared to tell you that Peter Drucker has published the same idea after I had initially sent my stuff to the publishers, using hospitals as an example. He used hospitals as an example, but he didn't copy from me.

Q: You both came to the same conclusion.

BROWN: We both came to the same conclusion at roughly the same time. His was written, I know, at least three months in advance of publication, as was mine.

I learned this from military. I learned this from hard-nosed colonels who had been in Vietnam. The military knows that the only thing that can possibly save them from the enemy shooting at them is what their men are able to do. So whatever the general has said, other than people like Oliver North, is not nearly as important as what the situation demands and what the troops will be able to do.

At universities, we identify who is president. But when you need to know anything, you don't come ask a president, because what he would have to do in most instance is ask one of the faculty members most concerned.

I asked a new young professor what to do, and he said, “We do this.”

I said, “Why do you do this?”

He said, “The dean asked us to do it.”

I said, “Why don't you go ask the dean what he deserves to be told?” Because you're recording this, I'm not going to tell you what I said to him.

Q: In the precise language.

BROWN: In the precise language. Also, voluntary organizations. If you're trying to raise money for such and such a thing, you only ask people to do what they will do. However you ask them, this usually includes, “What do you think about this, Mel? Is this something that you're willing to undertake?” And you tell them whether you're willing to undertake it or not.

I think it's proper, as perhaps you do, too, for your assistant to go over to the Civil Service Commission. I don't think it's necessarily wise, but I think it's proper to go over there when you and he disagree, and I'm glad you're able to show him that the Commission supported your point of view. I think if he'd had any sense, he would have tried to work it out in the agency and he might have gotten more from it from you if he had.

Q: Let's turn that one around a little bit, in all honesty. What we're talking about, by the way, was on the secretariat, I was the Deputy Director of Personnel, and the Chief of the Central Secretariat of the Marshall Plan had proposed raising some grades. The Chief of Classification, who served under me, lowered them, saying that they weren't worth that, that they were only comparable to what they call mail and file clerks.

I disagreed with him. I agreed with the Chief of the Secretariat, and so I exercised my authority, which is very seldom done in Washington, by the way, and I classified them myself. In effect, I took the authority away from the Chief of Classification for that instance, because I delegated it to him to begin with. Then he protested this to the Civil Service Commission. I went to the Commission representatives, they agreed with me, and the classification was allowed to stand.

But to go back to the point that you just made, Dave, maybe it was incumbent on me, as I look back all these many years, to have worked it out with the Chief of Classification so it never would have had to go to the Civil Service.

BROWN: Perhaps so. My feeling is that what we need to achieve is cooperativeness, and that's what I'm indicating. I think there were many things the Public Advisory Board could have been asked to do, which it did in a lesser respect, than were asked. While I come down strongly on the side of the decency of Paul Hoffman as administrator, and I have considerable admiration for him, I do know his opinion of the board, and I do know that he was unwilling to really work with them on the terms that they had to be worked with.

Q: It would be interesting to study Mr. Hoffman's career, as to what his relationship was to the Board of Directors of the Studebaker Corporation, later what his relationship was to the Board at the Ford Foundation, where he later went, how he treated them as distinctly from the Public Advisory Board.

BROWN: I know you had a large number of contacts with him.

Q: No, I didn't.

BROWN: Well, he was delightful.

Q: I personally never did.

BROWN: He was delightful. I remember one time after he had left as administrator, that I talked with him on the telephone. The phone rang, he had some questions, and I identified myself. We talked for ten or fifteen minutes on the phone, and he was delightful. He was personal in the sense that he asked how things were going, asked about family, etc. In a sense, I valued him and Tyler Wood greatly.

Q: An excellent man.

BROWN: Tyler wanted to take me to Korea with him, and I told him that in view of the circumstances, it could not be approved, and I would willingly go with him if it could be approved, but I knew it couldn't be.

Q: Was this under Stassen by then?

BROWN: Under Stassen. If you remember, he was made mission chief in Seoul.

Q: I'd forgotten that.

BROWN: He asked me to go with him. Later, when I was on assignment in Pakistan for an aid contract with the University of Southern California, he was the number-two man in the embassy in India. The number-one man was Galbraith. So I got to talk to him then about Pakistan and India. I had a very warm feeling towards him.

Q: I'm very intrigued by, and I support your idea of cooperativeness, rather than this direction.

BROWN: Sometimes you have to direct.

Q: Sometimes. Back again to Hoffman. Aside from the Advisory Board, how did he deal with the Marshall Plan in terms of getting ideas and using them? Or was he always trying to be a dictator?

BROWN: No, he was never a dictator. You must remember that when Hoffman came to Washington, he didn't know much more about affairs of government than any other businessman of his stature might have known. So in large part, this was the business of trying to break him into the governmental system. You know the problems that you all had with breaking Mullen in. Mullen, Director of Public Relations, had some useful ideas, important ideas. Later we learned that the CIA siphoned all sorts of money through his company to take on certain tasks. At least that's what was in the paper.

Hoffman was terrific. We did a number of things. Sometimes both of us, sometimes one of us took notes of what went on in the morning staff meetings early in the week. Let's say that the agency went to work at 8:30 in the morning. The staff meeting was usually called at about 8:00, and it would go on for half an hour. I well remember Don Stone coming in late at one meeting, and how apologetic he was, because almost everybody else was there. It was like a kid coming in late to school. I'd always had a very high regard for Don and still do. He invited me to consider joining him at Pittsburgh on the faculty, and I was delighted. He's done a number of things since he's left Pittsburgh full-time as dean. I greatly appreciated his offer.

Q: If I may interject a moment, I think that Stassen inadvertently did the country and other professions a lot of good by some of the terminations that he effected. Don Stone is one of the best examples of that.

BROWN: I have no problem with that. Our relationships professionally were nil when I was in the agency. I have known him since, I've known of his efforts to encourage public administration.

Q: To bring this to a close, what are your views on the secretariat? Did Hoffman and others use the secretariat? Did they see it as a useful device?

BROWN: What I was about to tell you is the fact that Hoffman learned that something was taking place, someone was reporting, he would then say, “Can you take care of this?” And the person would reach in his pocket and take out an envelope, which was probably a laundry list, and then make some notes on it. Gordon Reckord said, “What we need to do is send this person a note saying what the administrators ask him to do, and not depend on his writing on the back of an envelope.” I remember Tyler Wood reaching in his pocket, taking out these things, and writing on the back of this envelope to do something.

Q: There was probably also on that envelope a little figure or a doodler. He was a great doodler.

BROWN: Yes, he doodled in—how can I say it?

Q: Very intricate forms, as I recall.

BROWN: Intricate forms. That's a good term.

Q: When the director or the administrator would say to one of his people, "I want you to do this," Gordon Reckord or yourself would then prepare a memo for Hoffman's signature?

BROWN: No, we'd just send a note on our own signature to say, "The administrators ask you to do such and such. Are we correct in this assumption? When can we expect an answer?"

Q: Did you have a tickler file to follow up?

BROWN: No.

Q: You didn't gig them in any way?

BROWN: No. They were important people. What we might do is put it on the next week's agenda.

Q: And have the administrator say, "By the way, Ty, how is this coming along?"

BROWN: Sure.

Q: Very good.

BROWN: This is one of the things that were done. Gordon is a peculiar person, and he's peculiar in the sense that he was very bright, but he also wanted to be in the position of

“making policy” and giving other people a chance to carry out the details. He had some useful ideas, but he always was trying to achieve a level which I felt he had no chance to achieve whatsoever. His knowledge of the agency, his knowledge of economics, his knowledge of geography—he was a geographer—was always considerably greater than mine.

Joe Turner, in addition to being bright, could remember all sorts of things of this nature, Mel. I suspect that this ingratiated him to Stassen. I couldn't remember them. You remember Ellis May?

Q: Oh, yes.

BROWN: Ellis would immerse herself in policy in the agency, and I had a hell of a time understanding this. I'm not an economist by nature, I'm kind of a behaviorialist, I notice what people do and make a mental note of the fact that they're likely to do it again. I make judgments concerning situations. As a matter of fact, coming over here today, I got to thinking about the agency. When I thought of Stone, there also popped into my memory the name of Alden Boyd.

End of interview